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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

South African Parliamentary Elections

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SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

White South Africans will go to the polls on 22 April to elect 166 members to the national parliament. The National Party, which has governed the country since 1948, is expected to win a comfortable majority. The emergence of the Herstigte Nasionale Party, ultraconservative in orientation, to challenge the National Party, however, has brought an element of uncertainty and bitterness to the campaign.

This election assumes special importance because the showing of the other parties will not only influence the policies and conduct of the Nationalist government, but will also affect future party alignments. The Herstigte Nasionale Party, which has drawn most of the attention of the National Party and the foreign press, will have to make a respectable showing if it is to establish itself as a permanent political force. Of the other groups, the United Party hopes to reverse its steady decline, and the Progressives will have to put up a tough fight simply to retain their one seat.

BACKGROUND

Most South African whites are of either Dutch or British origin. The Afrikaners—descendants of the original Dutch settlers who first arrived in South Africa in 1652—form an exclusive and close-knit community. Their traditional dislike for the English settlers, who had begun arriving at the end of the 18th century, was intensified by the Boer War of 1899. Fearing dilution of their culture and heritage, the Afrikaners generally have

subsequently resisted joining politically with the English-speaking community in a united white front.

The National Party, an Afrikaner political group that came to power in 1948, has been in control ever

since. By gerrymandering, restructuring the franchise, and building on white fears of the black majority, the party has gained strength with each election, largely at the expense of the opposition English-dominated United Party.



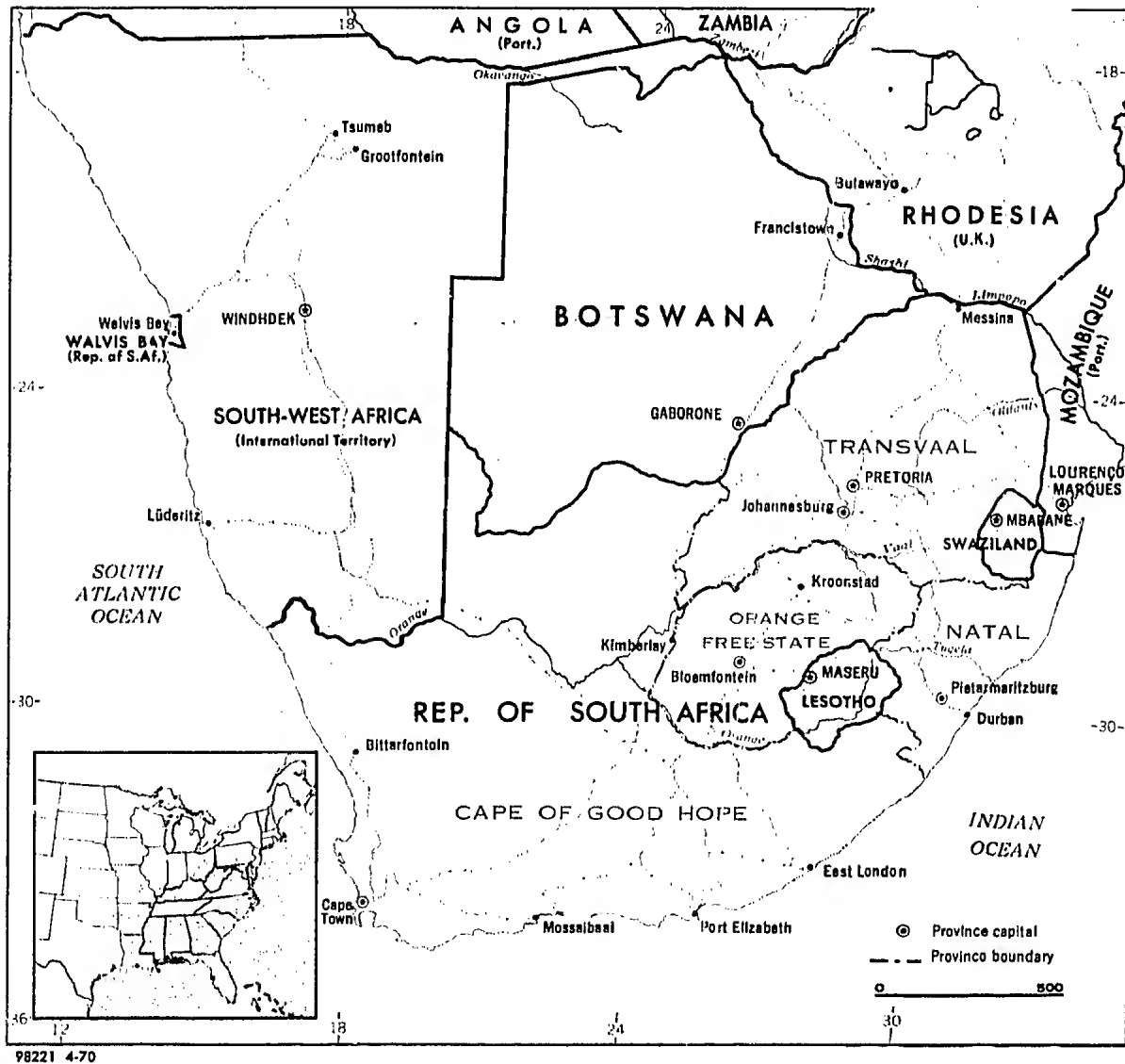
Opposition Leader Hertzog

After 20 years in control, however, the Afrikaner community has experienced significant change. Some Afrikaners, not closely wedded to the ideological doctrines of the past and influenced by a fast-rising bureaucracy and industrial leadership, want to alter traditional policies in order to meet changing conditions, particularly in the economy. They are being challenged by the old guard, who question any deviation from time-honored Afrikaner ideals. These two groups have been labeled



Prime Minister Vorster

SECRET



Special Report

- 2 -

17 April 1970

SECRET

SECRET

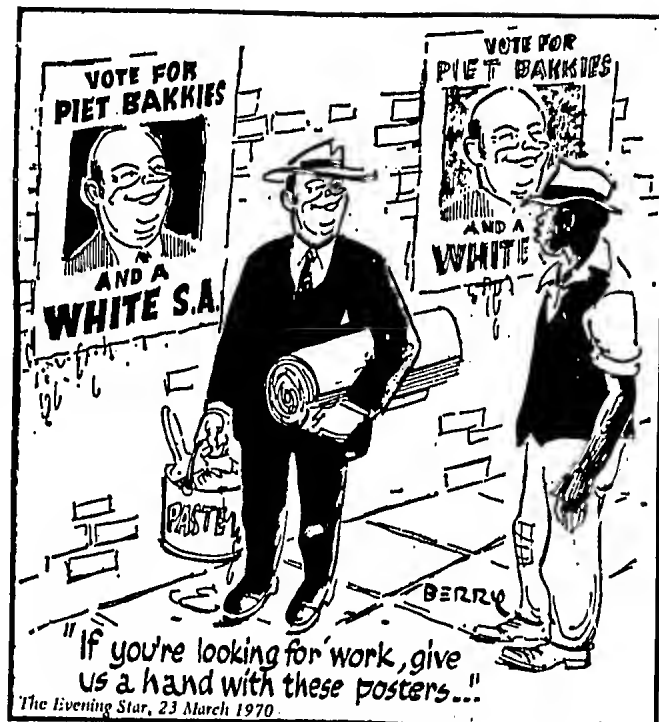
verligtes (enlightened ones) and verkrampes (narrow-minded ones); but the terms have come to mean—within the context of an essentially rightest National Party—"moderates" and "ultraconservatives."

During the tenure of Prime Minister Verwoerd (1958-66), the verkrampes of the National Party were weak and disorganized, but increasingly disgruntled. John Vorster, who was named prime minister after the assassination of Verwoerd in September 1966, is not the domineering and forceful politician that his predecessor was, and he proved unable to keep intraparty bickering under control. Last fall Vorster announced that national elections would be held this April, a year earlier than scheduled, partially to undercut the increasingly vocal conservative threat. Shortly afterward, several leading spokesmen for the verkrampes were expelled from the National Party, and within a month they had formed their own party, the Herstigte Nasionale Party.

THE SETTING

Over two million South African whites are registered to vote, nearly half of them from Transvaal Province, the heart of Afrikanerdom. Registration is up because there are 400,000 new voters since the last general election and because popular interest in this campaign has grown. A total of 407 candidates are seeking the 166 parliamentary seats. Only 155 of these are being contested, however; in six districts the United Party candidates are running unopposed, and in five districts the Nationalists are unopposed.

In the last elections, held in March 1966, the National Party won 126 seats, the United Party 39, and the Progressive Party one. This division of



seats does not completely reflect popular opinion, however, because gerrymandering of election districts has given the National Party an advantage. The National Party's share of the popular vote (of a total electorate of 1.8 million) was 59 percent; the United Party's 37, and the Progressive Party received most of the remaining four.

The nonwhites, who make up 81 percent of South Africa's population, have no voting rights in the national elections. Until this year, Coloureds—persons of mixed blood—were represented in the national parliament by four whites who were supposed to concern themselves primarily with Coloured affairs. But with the establishment of the Coloured Persons Representative Council in the fall of 1969, the Coloureds were completely removed from the national political scene and are now governed separately. Asians

SECRET

SECRET

and blacks have no representative in parliament, and neither group has the right to vote.

THE PARTIES

National Party. The ruling National Party is primarily an Afrikaner political organization espousing fervent Afrikaner nationalism. Membership is open to all white South Africans who are at least 18 years old and accept the party's principles and discipline. A high proportion of the Afrikaners—probably between a third and a half of those who qualify—are members; for many, it is as natural to belong to the party as to the Dutch Reformed Church, another powerful source of Afrikaner nationalism.

The National Party's success results primarily from its platform as the group best able to maintain white supremacy, especially in the post-World War II period when white supremacy was being threatened by the involvement in the urban economy of large numbers of Africans who were demanding concessions. The party came to power in 1948 largely because it insisted that racial segregation, as applied by the then-ruling United Party, was no longer enough, and that a policy of racial separation, called apartheid, was needed if white supremacy was to survive.

Since coming to power, the National Party has increased its majority with each election by what is probably the only formula for political longevity in South Africa: appealing to the Afrikaner voter as Afrikaners and to the British voter as whites. As its position grew more secure, the party made attempts to recruit some English-speaking whites. In 1961, for example, two conservative English-speaking whites were included in the cabinet for the first time. Since Vorster took over in 1966, he has extended the effort to win over the English-speaking voters under the slogan of "white unity" to such an extent that he has

been accused by the ultraconservatives in his own party of selling out the Afrikaners.

United Party. The United Party, the official parliamentary opposition, suffers from a lack of dynamic leadership and a pathetic "me-tooism" on apartheid. The United Party ruled the country from 1934 to 1948 and was wholeheartedly supported by virtually all the English-speaking white population, by most of the business interests, and by a small Afrikaner minority. Placed on the defensive after its defeat in 1948, the party has declined steadily and over the years has moved closer to the Nationalists' position on the race issue.

Although the United Party advocates minor liberalization of apartheid's petty harassments that cause the nonwhite population so much distress, it is firmly committed to white supremacy. The party talks vaguely about an approach to government that would allow blacks token representation by whites but it would otherwise leave the social and political structure intact.

Herstigte Nasionale Party. The new ultra-conservative groups, the Herstigte Nasionale Party, has made impressive gains since its formation less than six months ago. One of the party's prime objectives is to force the Nationalist government into a more conservative stance, especially with regard to apartheid. Party followers fear that any softening of the strict apartheid rules (such as allowing nonwhites to compete with whites in sporting events) would be the beginning of the end of white rule in South Africa.

The new party bases its appeal on Afrikaner exclusiveness, isolationism, and prejudice. It is an emotionally charged throwback to the rural past and a reaction to the changes and adjustments demanded by a modern industrial economy. The

SECRET

SECRET

party's platform calls for more vigorous implementation of apartheid, less aid to the blacks, and curtailment of contacts with black African nations.

Progressive Party. The Progressive Party, whose sole member in parliament, Helen Suzman, is one of South Africa's best known local critics, has declined in voting strength. Formed in 1959 by "liberals" who broke from the United Party, it is fundamentally opposed to apartheid. The Progressives advocate granting full political rights to all blacks who meet specific educational and economic qualifications, and they want to provide protection for all in a rigid constitution with a Bill of Rights.

THE ISSUES

White supremacy is not an issue in these elections. Three of the four parties accept white supremacy as necessary and desirable, differing only on ways to maintain it. Although the Progressives are against apartheid, they are still a long way from the "one man, one vote" formula advocated by Western democracies.

Vorster has tried to confine the election campaign to four main issues. One is the question of whether South African whites should be allowed to compete with nonwhites in sporting events, and whether such competition would violate apartheid laws; because both apartheid and sports are important to South Africans, this is a sensitive political question.

A second issue concerns Afrikaner-English cooperation. The Nationalists are trying to establish better relations between these two groups, but hard-core Afrikaners fear a dilution of their values in favor of the more permissive English culture as exemplified by "miniskirts and sports on Sunday."

Somewhat related is the immigration dilemma. Most new white immigrants from Europe are blue-collar workers and often Roman Catholic. As a result, many Afrikaners fear they will be gradually overwhelmed by these "lower class" whites. Yet the government must encourage white immigration to maintain the ratio of whites and blacks in the face of a rapidly growing nonwhite population.

Fourth, there is strong criticism from the ultraconservatives of the government's relatively friendly policy toward neighboring black African nations. Although Vorster obviously hopes this policy will defuse some of the hostility of the black states and create a somewhat more favorable image of South Africa in the West, the ultraconservatives fear that it will eventually undermine the apartheid system.

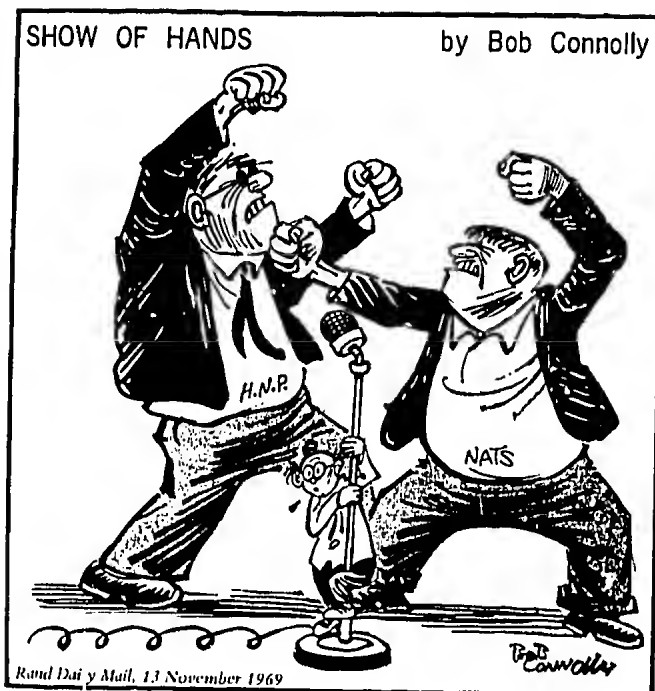
THE CAMPAIGN

The election campaign has proved to be one of the most bitter in South Africa's history. The splitting off from the National Party of the ultraconservatives has shaken a great many moderate Afrikaners, some of whom consider departure from the party treasonous. Most of the Nationalists' efforts during the campaign have been directed against the ultraconservatives. The National Party has dismissed the United Party in a rather peremptory manner, and the latter's attacks on the Nationalists have drawn scant attention.

The Nationalists' initial strategy was simply to prevent the ultraconservatives from getting their message to the people. The means they used included disrupting the party's rallies or loading these meetings with National Party supporters. On numerous occasions fist fights broke out and the speakers were heckled. At one meeting, the speaker was hurled from the platform three times

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SECRET



before he gave up. The frail, 71-year-old Albert Hertzog, leader of the Herstigte Nasionale Party, also was involved in scuffles until he began to be accompanied on the campaign by a former wrestling champion. The Afrikaners accepted this violence as normal, acknowledging that "politics, like rugby, is not for milksops."

The English, however, were appalled by these tactics, and National Party strategists soon realized that they were on the verge of making martyrs of the Herstigtes. The word went out to curtail the violence, and the campaign was reduced to name-calling. Increasing criticism of Vorster's handling of the ultraconservative challenge could presage an effort by some party members to make Vorster personally responsible for any setback the Nationalists may suffer in the election.

South Africa has few opinion polls comparable to those in the US for predicting election

results; no one has a good idea of what the voter is thinking. There is speculation that the Nationalists' overreaction to the ultraconservative threat may produce some sympathy votes for the new party. This may be countered by votes from United Party regulars who want to help the Nationalists fend off the greater evil. Which way the masses of new younger voters will swing is unknown, and how the ultraconservatives are being received by the Afrikaner industrial workers has not been ascertained. As a result of all these imponderables, all parties are optimistic and are predicting major upsets in their favor.

OUTLOOK

The National Party will win a majority of the 166 seats in parliament, although its present total of 123 seats may be reduced. Increased voter registration alone makes Nationalist retention of some seats open to question. In addition, the party will lose some of its previous supporters to both the right and the left, further cutting into its strength.

The United Party may gain a few seats, generally because of the split in Afrikaner ranks. Having lost seats in every election since 1948, an increase this year could put some spark back into the party.

If the Herstigte Nasionale Party receives between 50,000 and 100,000 votes and wins one or two seats in parliament, it will have made an impressive showing. The party could do it. It is expected to poll about 10 to 20 percent of the vote in each of the 79 constituencies in which it is fielding a candidate. Four of the party's leaders already have seats as Nationalists in parliament, and two of them stand a good chance of being re-elected.

The Progressives' chances this year are uncertain. Mrs. Suzman won her seat in 1966 by

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SECRET

only 700 votes, but the voter registration in her district is up nearly 2,000. This year the Progressives have a slim chance to win a seat in Natal Province and a seat in an elite suburb of Cape-town. In any event, the party will remain small and dedicated but quite far from the center of political power.

The longer term outlook for South Africa is difficult to forecast. There are reputed to be many ultraconservatives who are sympathetic with the views of the Herstigtes but who have remained in the National Party solely to get

elected this year. Some of them are expected to switch over to the Herstigte Nasionale Party after the election. They could take others with them if the new party looks promising. A second test of strength for the Herstigtes will come with the provincial elections scheduled for late 1970. A strong showing then could establish the ultraconservative party as a real political force. The National Party would then have to face the 1975 elections with threats from both the left and the right, with the accompanying loss of maneuverability.

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Special Report

- 7 -

17 April 1970

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